

The Subcommittee held an oversight hearing titled, “9/11 Health: Why Did HHS Cancel Contracts to Manage Responder Health Care?” in New York City. The hearing reviewed a recent decision by the Department of Health and Human Services to cancel a request for proposals to coordinate care for responders who are ill.

On October 23, 2007, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued a request for proposals to create a World Trade Center Business Process Center. Services to be provided by the contractor included:

- 1) Claims processing and bill payment for all medical monitoring and treatment services being provided to WTC responders in the current program;
- 2) Coordination of the provision of medical monitoring exams and treatment for WTC responders outside of the NYC vicinity;
- 3) Pharmacy benefits for all participants; and
- 4) Other member services including enrollment, information center, and dispute resolution.

Proposals were due on December 19, 2007. The solicitation was published in the Federal Register, and several interested bidders came to the pre-proposal conference. In response to questions at that meeting and subsequent inquiries, CDC issued clarifications on many issues related to the solicitation. At least one outside firm had prepared a proposal.

On December 13, 2007, CDC abruptly cancelled the solicitation. HHS officials have given competing explanations for the cancellation in press reports. A procurement official from CDC claimed that the solicitation was cancelled due to cost concerns, even though bids that would estimate costs had not yet been submitted. CDC officials also claimed that there was bidder confusion, although one potential bidder stated that they were not confused and in fact had submitted a contract proposal.

At the hearing, fire chief Frank Fraone, ironworker Joseph Libretti, and heavy equipment operator Kevin Mount, all suffering health problems from their work at Ground Zero, testified about the problems they have experienced accessing health care. The responders, along with public health experts, described the need for a comprehensive monitoring and treatment program, which HHS has failed to provide.

Although invited to participate, no representative from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services appeared. As a result, Chairman Towns sent a letter to HHS Secretary Michael Leavitt seeking documents on the cancellation of 9/11 health programs.

Documents and Links

- [Chairman Towns Opening Statement](#)
- [Statement of Cynthia Bascetta](#)
- [Statement of Frank Fraone](#)
- [Statement of James Melius](#)
- [Statement of Kevin Mount](#)